

GRGICH HILLS ESTATE
C E L E B R A T E S



“WHEN PREPARATION MEETS
OPPORTUNITY
— THAT IS LUCK.”

*A look back to the evolution of the quality, knowledge
and experience that allowed Napa Valley to make wines
that beat the best of France in the 1976 Paris Tasting*

MILJENKO “MIKE” GRGICH

NAPA VALLEY LEGEND

2008 INDUCTEE TO THE VINTNERS HALL OF FAME



CELEBRATING THE 1976 PARIS TASTING

MILJENKO 'MIKE' GRGICH

WINEMAKER EMERITUS
NAPA VALLEY LEGEND AND VINTNERS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

Remarks at the
35th ANNIVERSARY OF THE
PARIS TASTING WINEMAKER DINNER
Grgich Hills Estate ~ Rutherford, California
Saturday, May 28, 2011

Thank you for joining Grgich Hills Estate on this very important occasion — the celebration of the 35th Anniversary of the Paris Tasting. Tonight I would like to share with you a brief history about myself as well as how Napa Valley evolved and gained the respect of the world as a wine region ranked on par with France, Italy and Spain.

MY GOAL ... TO EXCEL

While studying Enology and Viticulture in the University of Zagreb in Croatia, Professor Hebrang had just returned from his sabbatical trip to California. We, his students, were very interested in knowing what California vineyards and vines looked like. His whispered answer was, "California is a Paradise." That activated my mind. I started to dream and thought, "Could I one day leave communism and be in California, in freedom, owning a little vineyard and winery?" What a dream!

With a little luck I obtained a Yugoslav passport and left Yugoslavia on August 8, 1954 with one small suitcase containing ten important books on how to make wine. That suitcase and the 1973 Chardonnay I crafted, which won the 1976 Paris Tasting, are now in the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. Aside from the books, I brought with me wine knowledge, love of freedom and US\$32.00 in between the soles of my shoe. I had in me the determination to excel and "to do better each day" as my father told me when I was a child.

After four years of trying to obtain an American visa I finally arrived in "Paradise" - Napa Valley - in the evening of August 15, 1958. I disembarked from a Greyhound bus in St. Helena



where a job was waiting for me at Souverain Cellars with Lee Stewart, owner of a small vineyard and winery. Mr. Lee Stewart was an artist winemaker from whom I absorbed important knowledge about high quality wine and sanitation.

NAPA VALLEY IN THE 1960's

In the 1960's Napa Valley had about 25 operating wineries and the urge to make better wines was everywhere. Three major sources were available to help and educate vintners and wineries to increase their ability to produce better wines – Napa Valley Vintners, Napa Valley Technical Group and the University of California, Davis.

Napa Valley Vintners (NVV) was a great source of knowledge and comradeship. NVV Secretary, Mr. Beard, organized monthly meetings to allow vintners to get to know one another, taste wines and hear a guest speaker.

A technical group composed of winemakers also met monthly to taste wines from different wineries and a guest speaker from UC Davis was invited. Most dinners were at Vern's Copper Chimney Restaurant in St. Helena.

University of California, Davis offered yearly summer wine courses and was always available and ready to help solve problems. The university had a great influence in the development of vineyards in Napa Valley. UC Davis developed AXR-1 rootstock that appeared to produce better wines for 30 years until phyloxera attacked them. As grape prices started rising, UC Davis devised many new techniques such as the 'smudge pot', wind machines and sprinklers to protect vines from spring frost and thus produce a normal crop every year. The university developed virus-free grape varieties to enable grapes to mature easier and encouraged the use of "drip irrigation" to save on the use of water.

Professors, now Emeritus, in the Department of Enology and Viticulture at the University of California, Davis who were most influential in helping vintners and wineries to make higher quality wines were Maynard Amerine, Harold William Berg, Carole Meredith, Harold Olmo, Vernon L. Singleton and Albert Winkler.

In the 1960's there were only four students at UC Davis enrolled in Enology and Viticulture. Today there are over 100 graduates a year. During the same period vineyards in Napa Valley sold for \$2,000 per acre. Today one acre of producing vineyard sells from \$300,000 to \$500,000.

PREPARATION AND OPPORTUNITY IN "PARADISE" NAPA VALLEY

While walking around the winery of Souverain Cellars on my first day, my first impression was exciting. I looked at the vines whose berries were half colored and half uncolored. It struck me that the grapes looked like Plavac Mali from my home in Croatia. When I read a book about Zinfandel, it stated that nobody knows the origin of its roots. On September 7, 2001 Dr. Edi Maletić and Dr. Ivan Pejić, scientists from the Agriculture Department of the University of Zagreb, found roots of Zinfandel in Croatia. With the assistance of Dr. Carole Meredith from UC Davis, it was proven through DNA testing that the roots of Zinfandel originated in Croatia.

At the end of 1958 I moved from the hills to the valley to work for Christian Brothers. In the 1960's Christian Brothers winery (now the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone) was one of the largest and most beautiful wineries in the Valley. Brother Timothy was the Chief Winemaker. Christian Brothers produced brandy, many different wines and bulk produced sparkling wines.



They were well known for Chateau La Salle Riesling, a semi-sweet wine. It was while I was at Christian Brothers that I heard about André Tschelistcheff, the most knowledgeable winemaker in California at that time.

In 1959 I moved to Beaulieu Vineyard and worked for André Tschelistcheff. When I met André Tschelistcheff at Beaulieu I was so pleased when he started talking to me in Croatian. Mr. Tschelistcheff offered me the position of Wine Chemist. We enjoyed working together. Aside from making wines for Beaulieu, we started to experiment with “cool fermentation” of white wines, malolactic induction using the best available yeast, sterile filtration before bottling the wine called “millipore filtration,” frost protection and other research. In 1968 André Tschelistcheff decided to retire from Beaulieu.

I moved from Beaulieu to the very attractive winery of Robert Mondavi. When I was interviewed by Robert Mondavi he said, “Mike, welcome! I am going to make out of you a ‘Little André Tschelistcheff.’” Robert had a great vision for his winery and Napa Valley. New technology was moving towards ‘roto’ tanks, French barrels, centrifuging, filtration and more. Vintage 1969 was the first full year we worked together. The Robert Mondavi 1969 Cabernet Sauvignon was exceptional. In 1972 Mr. Robert Balzer organized for the *Los Angeles Times* a blind tasting of the best of California Cabernet Sauvignon. This was the first time a blind tasting was conducted by 15 California winemakers. The Robert Mondavi 1969 Cabernet Sauvignon was the winner! As a result, great prestige was given to the Robert Mondavi Winery. It was at Robert Mondavi Winery where I added to my experience in learning how to make top quality wines.

Robert Mondavi was very eager to make quality wines like the French. As he wrote in the Foreword of the *Judgment of Paris* written by George M. Taber, “It was my pleasure to have worked with Mike Grgich and Warren Winiarski, who are the real heroes of this book. They were certainly more adept than I, but I like to think that they grasped my vision of what could be done in the Napa Valley, and I know we worked and planned and dreamed together that a day like that bicentennial event in 1976 could occur.”

On May 8, 1972 I was invited by Lee Paschich and James Barrett to Calistoga and was offered a new job with Chateau Montelena. The five-year contract stipulated that I would be the Winemaker for Chateau Montelena and aside from my wage I would receive 1% of Chateau Montelena’s partnership, that is 5% for five years. It also stated that I would be responsible for designing the winery, buying the equipment, grapes and hiring people to get started. I would also be in charge of the vineyard and winery. I got three assistants: Bo Barrett, son of James Barrett; Rom Steinaki, son-in-law of another partner, Ernest W. Hahn; and Ron Sculatti from St. Helena. Every new vintage earned great medals for wine we produced. At that time we produced Chardonnay, Johannisburg Riesling, Zinfandel and Cabernet Sauvignon.

There is a saying that “LUCK is when preparation meets opportunity.” In 1976 I was 53 years old and had 50 years of education and experience. My preparation met opportunity and my luck came when the 1973 Chardonnay I crafted for Chateau Montelena was chosen by an Englishman who owned a wine shop in Paris to be included in a blind tasting.

The 1973 Chardonnay was the most significantly successful wine crafted by me for Chateau Montelena. It was among the ten best Chardonnays of France and California to be judged by nine French judges in Paris on May 24, 1976. The 1973 Chardonnay crafted by Mike Grgich was chosen



the best with a score of 132 points. It was the champion and revolutionized the world of wine! This wine was perfect from its very beginning to its glorious finish; it was NEVER brown or discolored.

My success at the 1976 Paris Tasting was the result of my preparation and experience in winemaking and the opportunity of coming to “Paradise” - Napa Valley - and owning a winery was the culmination of a dream that began when I was a student of Enology and Viticulture at the University of Zagreb. In 1977 I opened Grgich Hills Cellar with Mr. Austin Hills and his sister, Mary Lee Strebl.

Quality, consistency, balanced wines and longevity of wine became our guideline for more success. The first vintage of Chardonnay I crafted at Grgich Hills Cellar in 1977 was included three years later in “The Great Chicago Showdown” which brought together 221 Chardonnays from around the world for a historic first: the largest blind tasting ever held of wines made from a single varietal. The Grgich Hills 1977 Chardonnay was the winner with a first place ribbon.

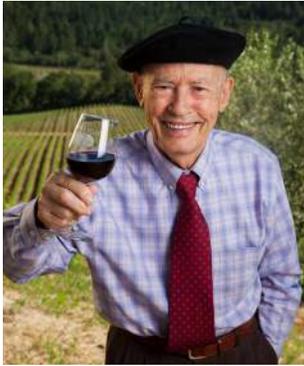
Another milestone in the history of Grgich Hills was when President Ronald Reagan took aboard Air Force One four cases of the 1979 Grgich Hills Chardonnay that I made to France for his State visit. The 1979 Grgich Hills Chardonnay was served at the dinner in honor of President and Mrs. Mitterand held at the American Embassy in Paris on June 3, 1982. President Reagan was the first American president to serve American wines to a French President in Paris. Many more presidents, kings, queens and celebrities were served Grgich Hills wines. It is with great pride that Grgich Hills Estate is known as the “House of Chardonnay.”

Before I conclude, I would like to request all of you to stand up and join me in a minute of silence to honor my mentors and wine icons Lee Stewart of Souverain Cellars, Brother Timothy of Christian Brothers, André Tschelistcheff of Beaulieu Vineyard, Robert Mondavi of Robert Mondavi Winery and Brad Webb who are all in Paradise, as well as the winemakers and vintners who, for the past 50 years, tried very hard to excel and elevate the quality of wines and vineyards in California. We worked hand in hand to accomplish the belief of Robert Mondavi that “we had the soil, the climate, and the grape varieties to make wines in the Napa Valley that could rank with the great wines of the world.” Robert Mondavi was proven right when the 1973 Cabernet Sauvignon crafted by Warren Winiarski and the 1973 Chardonnay crafted by Mike Grgich outdid the best French Bordeaux and Burgundy wines in the 1976 Paris Tasting.

Thank you very much.

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Miljenko Mike Grgich



Miljenko "Mike" Grgich

President, Winemaker & Co-proprietor

An inductee to the Vintners Hall of Fame, Miljenko "Mike" Grgich is a legend in the Napa Valley. Over the past 50 years, Mike's wines, crafted in the classic Old World tradition, have won a stream of California and international prizes, establishing Grgich Hills Estate as one of the premier wineries in the United States and the world. Passionate and relentless in his quest for quality, Mike has also helped pioneer a number of significant breakthroughs in California winemaking techniques, including the use of cold sterilization and malolactic fermentation and the use of oak barrels for proper aging.

Mike's most celebrated achievement came in 1976 when a Chardonnay he crafted for Chateau Montelena beat the very best wines in France in a now famous blind tasting in Paris. This event that stunned the wine world catapulted the Napa Valley into the front ranks of the leading wine-producing regions of the world. "For years, everybody in the world believed that only French soils could produce great wines," Mike explains. "We shattered that myth. That was probably the most significant result of the Paris tasting. Our victory pumped new energy into the California wine industry, particularly in the Napa Valley, and it energized winemakers in many other parts of the world, such as Argentina and Chile. They realized that if we could do it, so could they."

Mike's success in America grew naturally from his family roots deep in the soil of his native Croatia. Miljenko Grgich was born April 1, 1923, in the village of Desne on Croatia's Dalmatian coast. The family owned a small winery and vineyard, and every year his father made wine, as did his grandfather and great-grandfather before him. As a toddler, and one of 11 children, Miljenko was weaned from his mother to a 50-50 mixture of water and red wine and at the tender age of three he began stomping grapes. Later he went to business college and then, in 1949, he went to the University of Zagreb, where he studied chemistry, enology, microbiology, soil biology, meteorology, irrigation, plants, fruit and grapes, all in preparation for becoming a winemaker.

Mike was miserable, though, under communist rule in Yugoslavia. So, in 1954 in search of freedom, he fled to West Germany and then made his way to Canada. But his dream destination was always America. A professor in Zagreb had told him that California was paradise, and he had long been inspired by stories of self-made Americans like Henry Ford, Andrew Carnegie, and John D. Rockefeller. In 1958, Mike finally made it. With one small suitcase, he arrived in the Napa Valley. Immediately he went to work for Lee Stewart, founder of Souverain Winery and an early Napa Valley pioneer. After one harvest, Mike moved to Christian Brothers and then on to Beaulieu Vineyard where he spent nine years working alongside the legendary Russian winemaker André Tchelistcheff. In 1968, eager for more responsibility, Mike became chief enologist at the most innovative winery at the time, the Robert Mondavi Winery.

"In 1969, I made my first Cabernet for Robert Mondavi," Mike recalls. "I introduced malolactic fermentation and other methods we had been developing at Beaulieu. Then, in an important blind tasting, fifteen California winemakers proclaimed ours to be the best Cabernet in all of California."

In 1972, Mike joined Chateau Montelena as winemaker and limited partner. Four

years later the success of his Chardonnay at the Paris tasting led to fulfilling his life long dream of owning his own winery. In 1977, joining forces with Austin Hills of the Hills Bros. coffee family, Mike created Grgich Hills Cellar, located in Rutherford, the heart of the Napa Valley. Soon, Mike scored another huge victory in “The Great Chicago Showdown.” In 1980, 221 Chardonnays were brought together for a historic first, the largest blind tasting ever held of wines made from a single varietal. And Mike’s Grgich Hills 1977 Chardonnay emerged triumphant with a first place ribbon. Mike later became affectionately known as the “King of Chardonnay.”

Mike’s influence also continues to spread. In 1996, he returned to his native Croatia and opened a new winery, Grgić Vina, to make fine wines and to bring Croatia the latest in modern winemaking techniques. In one of his proudest accomplishments, in 2001 Mike played an instrumental role along with U.C. Davis Professor Carole Meredith in tracing the mysterious roots of California Zinfandel back to a surprising source: his native Croatia. In 2006 the winery switched to solar power and in 2007 Grgich Hills became completely estate grown and changed its name to Grgich Hills Estate in recognition of that significant achievement. Today, Grgich Hills owns 366 acres of vineyards throughout the Napa Valley and produces 65,000 cases of award-winning estate grown wines. Mike’s continued commitment to making wine as naturally as possible has led to all five vineyards being farmed without artificial fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides; relying on wild yeast fermentation, and using his passion and art to handcraft food-friendly, balanced and elegant wines.

In 2012, Mike was the subject of the documentary “Like the Old Vine” that premiered at the Napa Valley Film Festival. Filmed by Croatian National Television in the Napa Valley, the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., and Mike’s birthplace in Desne, Croatia, it describes Mike’s extraordinary life, achievements and how his “American Dream” became a reality. That same year, The Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History in Washington D.C. featured Mike in its first major exhibition on food history—“FOOD: Transforming the American Table 1950–2000” that opened on November 20, 2012. A major section of the exhibition focuses on the revolution in American wine in the second half of the 20th-century. The exhibition features the 1973 Chardonnay crafted by Mike that won the 1976 Paris Tasting and includes the small cardboard suitcase he traveled with when he left Croatia, his winemaking text books and his famous beret.

Having turned 92 years old on April 1, 2015, Mike continues to guide Grgich Hills Estate and to plan for its future. While some Napa Valley wineries look to expand, Mike and his daughter, Violet Grgich, and his nephew Ivo Jeramaz prefer to stay small and to focus on improving the quality of their vineyards and wines, always according to Mike’s unique artistic and intuitive touch. As Mike explains, “There is no sure-proof scientific formula for making great wines. Over the years I have learned to communicate with the wines and how to nurture them. I realized that you don’t make wine only with your head and your senses. You make wine with your heart. You have to pour your heart and your love into the wine. To me, wines are like my children. You have to love them and guide them like children, and you have to transmit to them the richness of your spirit.”



GRGICH HILLS ESTATE

P.O. Bpx 450 1829 • St. Helena Hwy. • Rutherford, CA 94573
(707) 963-2784 • www.grgich.com